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# THE CONDOR

An Illustrated Magazine  
of Western Ornithology

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## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County has now under construction in Exposition Park, formerly Agricultural Park, in the city of Los Angeles, a building to be used for museum purposes. The name of the new institution is the Museum of History, Science and Art; the building is to cost \$226,000, exclusive of heating, lighting, decorating, or furnishing. Its purpose is the conservation and exhibition of scientific, historical and art objects. It is governed by a board of nine persons, chosen as follows: Two members from the Southern California Academy of Sciences, two from the Historical Society of Los Angeles, two from the Fine Arts League, one from the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club, the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, and one member elected by those chosen as above stated. The present members of the Board of Governors are as follows:

W. A. Spalding and Dr. A. Davidson, representing the Academy of Sciences, Dr. Geo. F. Bovard and J. M. Guinn, representing the Historical Society, Mrs. W. H. Housh and A. F. Rosenheim, representing the Fine Arts League, Howard Robertson, representing the Cooper Club, R. W. Pridham, representing the Board of Supervisors, and W. M. Bowen, member at large.

Mr. W. M. Bowen has been elected President of the Board, and Mr. Howard Robertson Secretary. The duty of the Board is to take full

charge of the building, provide specimens and exhibits, and do such other things as are ordinarily required in the conduct of an institution of this character.

At present, progress is being made in the mounting of paleontological specimens from La Brea Ranch, and such other specimens as have been donated up to the present time.

The Museum building is divided into three wings; the north wing to be devoted to history, the south wing to natural sciences, and the west wing to art. The scientific department will be devoted to zoological specimens for exhibition purposes, as well as series for study, and it is expected that very large collections will be made. The historical department will deal largely with the early history of the south-west, and will contain many of the valuable records, books and other documents of the earlier history of southern California. The art department will be devoted to the exhibition of paintings, statuary, etc. There is now being prepared a bronze group, representing history, science and art, which, when completed, will be placed in the rotunda of the building.

Great success has been met with in obtaining exhibits, for the reason that as Los Angeles County has long been in need of a building of this kind, many people are glad of the opportunity to place collections therein. The building, of course, is absolutely fire proof, and being a county institution, sufficient funds for its maintenance are assured. It is expected that it will be completed and ready for occupancy some time during the latter part of September, or early in October. It will be some time after that before it is formally opened, as a large amount of work will have to be done in arranging exhibits and specimens.

The "Directory of the Cooper Ornithological Club" appearing in this issue contains the names of 369 active and five honorary members, showing a substantial increase in the size of the Club during the past year.

## PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

J. H. BOWLES' "NOTES EXTENDING THE [KNOWN] RANGE[S] OF CERTAIN BIRDS ON THE PACIFIC SLOPE" (*Auk* XXVIII, April 1911, pp. 169-178).—This article was avowedly prompted by the recognized shortcomings of the Third Edition of the A. O. U. Check-List in the matter of statements of distribution. The notes deal with about forty species as occurring in the State of Washington or in California in the vicinity of Santa Barbara.

In the first place the present reviewer would make the point in defense of the Check-List that the limitations imposed by practical size of the work necessitated the use of the most general terms in the outlining of ranges. On this score the Check-List statement that *Certhia familiaris zelotes* ranges "south to San Jacinto Mountains, spreading into adjacent valleys in winter" would seem to cover the possibility of its occurrence at Santa Barbara

in January as established by Mr. Bowles, so that the criticism of this and similar cases does not appear fairly deserved. Mr. Bowles' record in itself is, however, of decided value in adding a definite station to our detailed data on the distribution of the bird.

In the second place the obvious fact, apparent to anyone studying distribution of North American birds, that very many good records were overlooked by the compilers of the Check-List, resulting in inadequate statements of range, would fully warrant several of Mr. Bowles' "extensions". Here, however, Mr. Bowles might have clearly indicated whether his contribution was to serve as a criticism of the Check-List, or as an actual addition to known facts. (By "known" is meant *published*, and hence available to the public.) Thus, *Passerculus rostratus rostratus* had been previously recorded from Santa Barbara (Heermann, Pac. R. R. Rep. X, 1859, p. 46) and even as far north as Santa Cruz (Mailliard, CONDOR VI, Jan. 1904, p. 16).

In the third place the difficulties in the way of proper sub-specific designation have evidently lead to a difference in employment of names, and so have given rise to "extensions" of range in some cases probably warranted, in others not. The subspecific status of any bird in a given region cannot be safely considered as established upon the snap judgment of even the foremost of experts, nor upon conclusions reached by any person with scanty material or limited experience in systematic ornithology. Thus in *Psaltiriparus* the determination of the correct name of the form at Santa Barbara would depend on a careful study of normal variation in series of specimens not only from Santa Barbara but from other geographic areas and taken at all seasons; also upon nomenclatural considerations based upon a study of literature with a view to ascertaining the applicability of the various proposed names. The same would be true for *Chamaea* and *Pipilo*.

Mr. Bowles' remarks in regard to the status of the Bush-Tit and Wren-Tit at Santa Barbara, give one to understand that the author thinks it probable that in each case *two* subspecies may exist in the vicinity, one being migratory. In our experience such a condition in these species is scarcely possible. Neither of the birds in question is migratory beyond a very limited local movement. The difference noted in specimens will probably be found to fall within the range of variation due to seasonal, age, or individual factors.

As of faunal interest and perhaps, worthy of different interpretation than that suggested by Mr. Bowles, the Stephens Fox Sparrow is recorded from an elevation of 3000 feet "in the hills of Santa Barbara County", under date of August 30. This is probably a transient

station, and *not* a breeding station. It is *not* the "farthest north record" for the species, as it is well known to breed in the high Transition zone on the north side of Mt. Pinos, lat. 34° 50' (see *Auk* XXII, Oct. 1905, p. 388). This locality is what is called "Tejon" Mountains in the A. O. U. Check-List.

It is extremely unfortunate that Mr. Bowles put *Pinicola enucleator californica* on record from southern California upon such inadequate evidence as that submitted. The occurrence of the species at any season at so low an elevation as 3000 feet anywhere in California is in itself exciting of comment. But when we consider that the species has never been recorded in California south of the head of the San Joaquin river, in Madera or Fresno County (Fisher, N. Am. Fauna No. 7, May 1893, p. 79), and never, winter or summer, below the Canadian life zone, a record like the present one demands the severest test. The California Pine Grosbeak is a species the occurrence of which anywhere under such zonal conditions as the "hills of Santa Barbara County", to be thoroughly established would have to be backed up by the taking of specimens at the very least. What makes this record the limit of badness is that it is couched in full scientific form and will have to be synonymized, but under what? If under *Pinicola*, an extra citation will be needed—with a question mark.

Another criticism of Mr. Bowles' paper is that some of the facts offered have been published fully by himself or others elsewhere; for example, in the case of *Steganopus tricolor* at Santa Barbara. Is it justifiable to repeat records and thus multiply citations except where a general review of the status of a species is attempted?

Now, whatever points I have indicated above, whether they be accepted by my readers as well taken or not, are made with their general bearing in view, and *not* with the intent of personally "scorching" Mr. Bowles! This should be clearly understood by the casual reader. In fact, Mr. Bowles told me some of the things he proposed to put on record long before this *Auk* article was sent in, and, knowing that I might take exceptions, invited me to publish my criticisms freely. Not one of us is beyond the possibility of making egregious errors, and never will be. But let us all exercise caution and the extreme of care in putting our supposed facts on record. I have been guilty myself of making a number of bad records (see CONDOR IV, Jan. 1902, p. 17). It gives a distinctly uncomfortable feeling that I never quite escape from. Perhaps this individual sensitiveness is a fortunate circumstance for our science. If so, would that it were a trait common to all bird students!—J. GRINNELL.